00042867

821.91
Mas/Poe
42867

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020

A POEM AND TWO PLAYS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Uniform with this Volume

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

GOOD FRIDAY: A PLAY IN VERSE

LOLLINGDON DOWNS AND OTHER POEMS

THE FAITHFUL: A PLAY

PHILIP THE KING AND OTHER POEMS

THE DAFFODIL FIELDS

DAUBER: A POEM

ALSO

GALLIPOLI.
One volume, cr. 8vo., illustrated, 2s. 6d. net.

THE OLD FRONT LINE.
Cr. 8vo., illustrated, 2s. 6d. net.

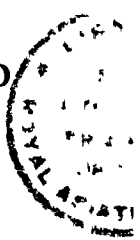
LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

A POEM
AND TWO PLAYS

42867

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

42867

LONDON : WILLIAM HEINEMANN. 1919

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ROSAS - - - - - -	1
THE LOCKED CHEST - - - -	41
THE SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT - -	121

ROSAS

ROSAS

There was an old lord in the Argentine,
Named Rosas, of the oldest blood in Spain;
His wife was the proud last of a proud line,
She ruled his house for him and farmed his plain:
They had one child, a tameless boy called John,
Who was a little lad a century gone.

This little boy, the Rosas' only child,
Was not like other children of his age,
His body seemed a trap to something wild
That bit the trap-bars bloody in his rage.
He had mad eyes which glittered and were grim;
Even as a child men were afraid of him.

And once, when old Lord Rosas at a Fair
Talked with his friends, this little boy being by,
An old man called the child and touched his hair,
And watched the wild thing trapping in his eye,
Then bade the child "Go play," and being gone
Wept bitter tears in sight of everyone.

And when Lord Rosas asked him, why he cried,
He said "Because I see, round that child's head,
A sign of evil things that will betide
Through him, being man. There is a blur of red,
A blur of blood, a devil, at his side;
I see his future. That was why I cried.

I am an old, old man limping to death,
And many a wicked thing have I seen done.
Bloody and evil as the Preacher saith
Are ill men's dealings underneath the sun.
But this bright child is fated to such crime
As will make mark a bloody smear on Time."

So he went weeping, while the gossips bade
Lord Rosas not to heed the poor old loon.
Lord Rosas died soon after and was laid
Deep in the pit where all lie late or soon.
Under the flagstone in the chancel dim
Evil and happy fate were one to him.

After his death, his widow ruled the son
Some few short years; some bitter bouts they had;
That old hot proud un-understanding one
Roused night and day the devil in the lad,
She with her plans, and he with all his dreams
Of the great world washed by the ocean streams.

* * * * *

It was the custom in that outland plain,
That young men, nobly born, should serve awhile
Under some merchant, keeping store for gain,
So to learn commerce, and by service vile,
Sweeping the floors, to sense (with gritted teeth)
Man and this world of his from underneath,

And seeing life, because those merchants' stores
Were clubs and markets used by everyone
For plots and bargains and the test of ores.
Señora Rosas ordered that her son
Should like his father, enter, being of age,
'A country storehouse as the merchant's page.

"I do as father did?" he answered, "I?
Sweep out a cheater's office with a broom,
And peddle sardines? I had rather die.
While there's a cow to brand or horse to groom
I'll be a man. So let your merchant find
Some priest or eunuch with my father's mind."

She spoke again. He said, "I will not go."
"Then," she replied. "My son, you shall not eat,
Nor drink, until you do. You tell me, No.
A resty calf that quarrels with the teat
Shall starve, for me. Men, lock this braggart lad
Into his room." They did as they were bade.

They left him in his room all through the day,
With neither food nor drink; they asked him thrice,
"John, here is dinner; will you not obey?"
They brought him raisin biscuits to entice
Him to obey. His friend the horse-herd came.
But John would neither answer nor be tame.

When twilight fell, his mother asked again,
"John, be advised, be wise and do my will.
Why be so headstrong, giving me such pain?
Are you not hungry? There is dinner still.
Say you will go, then come and eat with me."
"I won't," he said. "Then you may starve," said she.

So when the night was dark, the mother said,
"Leave him to-night, to-morrow we shall find
His fal-lals cured and I shall be obeyed.
No cure like hunger to a stubborn mind."
Then through the keyhole to her son she cried
"Good-night, my son." None answered from inside.

Then, when the morning came, they knocked the door,
"John, will you go?" they asked. No answer came.
One said, "I see him lying on the floor.
He is asleep or playing at some game,
Come, Master John, don't treat our lady so.
Look, here are eggs, be good and say you'll go,"

No answer came, so then they craned, and peered
Into the keyhole at the room beyond.
"Pray God," said one, "It be not as I feared.
A lad so proud should never be in bond.
He had his Indian lance-head on the shelf.
John, Master John. He may have killed himself.

John, God, he has. He's lying on the floor,
Look, there's his body. Fetch the crowbars here.
Yes, he is dead, God help us; burst the door,
Run for a doctor, one. A dear, a dear,
He was the likeliest lad there ever was.
Now, Ramon, heave. Now Martin, now Tomás.

Heave." So they hove and entered with the heave;
What they had thought was John was but a pile
Of clothing, rolled to man's shape to deceive.
John was not there, he had been gone awhile.
His bed was cold, a pencilled letter lay
There on his clothes, but John had run away.

"Dear Mother," said the letter, "You and I,
With different souls must live by different laws.
I give back all you gave me, now goodbye.
If I go naked hence, you know the cause,
I keep my father's name. When I am gone
I shall be gone forever. I am, John."

He had gone naked into the night air.
He and his Mother never met again.
He wandered southwards, many leagues from there,
Past the last ranches to the Indian plain,
South to the ranges where the spirits brood,
To daunt wild horses for his livelihood.

* * * * *

There on the ranges with a half-wild crew
Of Gauchos, cut-throats, thieves, and broken rakes
He caught and broke wild horses. There he knew
Death as the bloody pay of all mistakes.
There, in the Indian forays he was bred
To capture colts and squaws and scalp the dead.

There he got strength and skill, till all men there,
Even the Indians, spoke of him as fey.
He beat the unbacked stallion from his mare,
And mounted him, and made the beast obey.
And bitted him and broke, and rode him home
Tame as a gelding, staring, white with foam.

There was no horse so wild he could not break him
By hands and one small thong; no Gaucho brave
Wrestling him naked, knee to knee, could shake him,
Or in the knife game give him what he gave,
Or in the midnight's thundering cattle hunt
Pass the mad herd, like him, to turn their front.

But most of all, men saw him take the lead
In war time, when the Indian tribes were out;
Then he paid bloody threat by bloody deed,
And many a painted Indian in his clout
Swung from the oak-tree branches at his order.
The forays ended while he kept the Border.

Then, when the March was quiet, he became
A rancher there, and wed, and gat a child,
A little girl, (Manuela was her name).
Then, as the darling of that frontier wild,
He moved and ruled and glittered and was grim
Among the Gaucho troops who worshipped him.

There was a little child (an old man now)
Who saw him pass once in those Indian days,
"Lean, quick and cruel, with a panther-brow
And wandering eyes that glittered to a blaze,
Eyes of a madman, yet you knew him then
The one man there, a natural king of men."

And cantering with him rode the frontier band
Whooping and swearing as they plied the quirt,
The thousand rake-hells of the South Command
With tossing bit-cups bright and flying dirt
And Rosas far in front; his long red cloak
Streaming like flame before the thunder stroke.

* * * * *

There were two parties in that distant state,
The Whites and Reds, who, for long years, had filled
The lives of all the country with their hate,
The graves of all their churchyards with their killed.
There was no White or Red with hands not brued
Or smutched in blood in that old party feud.

This feud made havoc in the land; yet still
Stopped at the ranges where Lord Rosas rode,
There the wild Indians were enough to kill,
Christians were friends, men held the common code,
"Death to the Indians"; but within the pale
Red against White made murder an old tale.

And in the city where the Senate sat
So violent this bloody quarrel was
That men stole to their business like the cat
By silent streets where pavements sprouted grass,
And at the corners crouched with stealthy eyes,
Peered, and drew back, or flashed upon their prize.

This state of daily murder, nightly plot,
Killing and burning of the White and Red,
Lasted three years, till in the land was not
One home of man without some victim dead;
Then, in the guilty Senate, someone sane
Cried, "Whites and Reds, let us have peace again.

This quarrel makes us beasts in the world's eyes,
Anarchs and worse. O let this murder end,
Before God smites us down to make us wise,
Let us forget our pride and condescend;
Forget the past, and let some leader make
Order among us for the great God's sake.

Then someone said, "What leader? What man here
Could both sides trust? All here are Red or White.
This bloodshed will go on another year,
Or ten more years, until we Reds requite
Some of our wrongs, until the Whites restore
Their bloodied spoils; then peace comes; not before."

Then there was tumult; but the first took heart,
And spoke again, "We are all sick with blood.
Let be old sins and spoilings. Let us start
Another page. Have done with flinging mud.
Bury the wicked past. Let both sides strive,
Since both sides care, to save this land alive."

Then an old White began: "We Whites have striven
Against injustice; not for lust of gain.
You Reds no less. Now in the name of Heaven
Let not our fellow sufferer plead in vain.

Life makes us neither Red nor White, but men
Self-bound in hell. Let wisdom free us then?"

Then the first speaker answered, "It is clear,
Since this great city is so racked with feud,
And we so stained with blood, that no one here
Can bring back quiet to the multitude.
All here have taken part. Peace cannot come
But by pure hands, into this devildom.

What I propose is, that we straightway call
Young General Rosas and the South Command
(Men of no clique, but trusted soldiers all)
Here to make peace, that so this groaning land
May, with the help of one whom all can trust,
Finish with feud and rise up from the dust."

There was much talking, but since all were tired
Of murder in the streets, and no way shewed
Save this, to bring the quiet long-desired,
It was decreed; and so a horseman rode
To summon Rosas north. It was not long
Ere Rosas came, with troops, a thousand strong.

Then Rosas wrote to tell them: "I have come,
I and my men, obeying your request;
I shall remain until the morning drum,
Then I go back, unless your House invest
Me with the absolute command, to deal
As I think fit to save the Commonweal."

Much as they longed for peace, this bid for power
Startled the House; they cavilled; they demurred.
At dawn Lord Rosas wrote: "In one more hour
I return South, so send me instant word."
"It makes him King," they thought, yet in their lust
For party vengeance, all agreed they must.

So, with both parties hoping for the lives
Of all their foes, through Rosas, there was calm,
And Reds and Whites both went to whet their knives,
Licking their lips for blood. Without a qualm
The Senate voted, "Let it be agreed
That Rosas come"; and so it was decreed.

So Rosas entered in and took command
And ruled the city to a Roman peace.
For three long days the cut-throats in his band
Killed at his nod, and when he bade them cease
The town was tame, for those who could not flee
Were killed or crushed. "I rule henceforth," said he.

* * * * *

So Rosas came to power. Soon his hold
Gripped the whole land as though it were a horse.
Church, Money, Law, all yielded. He controlled
That land's wild passions with his wilder force.
And through their tears men heard from time to time
His slaves at worship of his clever crime.

And if the city, terrified to awe,
Loathed him, as slaves their masters, he was still
The Gaucho's darling captain; he could draw
Their hearts at pleasure with his horseman's skill.
None ever rode like Rosas; none but he
Could speak their slang or knew their mystery.

So that, in all his bloodiest days, a crowd
Of Gauchos hung about his palace-gate,
And when he went or came they shouted loud
" Long life to Captain Rosas." They would wait
For hours to catch his nod. Their patient rags
Were brighter to his soul than flowers or flags.

And with this Gaucho power he ruled his slaves
By death alone; within his audience halls
Stretched end to end on Indian lances' staves,
Were long red streamers propped against the walls
Crowned by these words " Death to the Whites ";
but he
Dealt death to Reds and Whites impartially.

Death was his god, his sword, his creed of power,
Death was his pleasure, for he took delight
To make his wife and daughter shrink and cower
By tales of murder wreaked on Red or White,
And while these women trembled and turned pale,
He shrieked with laughter at the witty tale.

Those two alone could counter Rosas' will;
His wife and daughter; they could bend his mind
To mercy (sometimes) from a purposed ill;
So, when his heart some bloody deed designed,
With merry cunning he would order one
To jail those women till the deed was done.

He had one jest, which was, to bid to feast
Someone most staid, some bishop without speck,
Some city-lord, some widow-soothing priest,
And then to drop red fire-ants down his neck;
Then, as his victim flinched and tried to hide
His pains, Lord Rosas laughed until he cried.

He held no Council; but a Gaucho fool,
Dressed like a British general, played the clown
About the palace, and was used to rule,
Vice-regent for him, when he left the town.
No other colleague had he, but at hand
He kept some twelve, his chosen murder-band

These twelve were picked young nobles, choicely
bred,
Sworn in a gang, the Thugs or Gallowsbirds,
A club of Death, of which he was the head,
That saved the State great cost in lawyer's words;
Writs, prosecutions, bails, defences, pleas,
Were over-ruled by judges such as these.

For, if he wished a person killed, he bade
The victim and the chosen murderer dine
In palace with him, while the minstrels played,
And he was host and joked and passed the wine,
And at the midnight he would see them start
Like friends for home, and all the time the cart

Stood waiting for the corpse at the street-end.
And then the murderer, warming to his man
In the dark alley's chill, would say, "My friend,
I love this talk," and then would jerk a span
Of knife into his throat and leave him dead;
Then tell the dead-cart-gang and go to bed.

Thus Rosas ruled; yet still, he feared the Church
That outlasts men, so, on a day, he cried
"Martin, our patron Saint, shall quit his perch;
No dirty foreign saint shall be our guide.
Priests of those churches which have Martin's
head
Over their altars, shall put mine instead."

This the priests did, with many a pious phrase
About obedience. When the deed was done
His haters gave up hope. They could not raise
Any rebellion against such an one.
He was like god, a prying god, who saw
Even in their souls the breakers of his law.

The terror of his rule hung like a ghost
Thirsty for blood, about men's haunted minds,
Those who dared whisper what they felt were lost;
He ground their fortunes as the miller grinds;
And in their hate men heard the Gauchos sing
"God-given Rosas is indeed a king."

* * * * *

ROSAS

There was a soldier in the city there,
Colonel O'Gorman, with an only child,
A girl, Camilla, worshipped everywhere
For merry sweet young beauty dear and wild.
So dear and merry she was like the sun
Shining and bringing life to everyone.

And in the Bishop's house, there lived a priest,
The Chaplain Laurence, who was sick with shame
At all his Church's sitting at the feast
With bloody-handed men who went and came
Unchecked, unbraved, condoned; he longed to break
With such a Church, for his religion's sake.

But, being bent, by training, to obey,
And having hope and an appointed task,
He held his tongue, and wrought, and went his way,
And hid his weary heart behind a mask,
Though it was hard. As City Chaplain he
Was widely known throughout the Bishop's see.

And being fond of music, it so fell
That he and that Camilla sometimes met
In quires and singing places; ah, too well
For those two souls their red and white was set.
For love went winging through their hearts, and then
What else could matter in this world of men?

They became lovers, but by secret ways,
With single words, with looks, in public rooms,
Among a world of spies, in a great blaze,
They hid this splendid secret of their dooms.
Often a week of longing had to end
Without one word or look from friend to friend.

So months of passionate trouble passed them by
Making them happy with intensest pain
That brought them down all heaven from the sky
And by sharp travail made them born again.
Could they but speak, their passionate souls made blind
Trod the high stars in the eternal mind.

Till, in the Spring, Camilla's father planned
To take Camilla to the country, there
(So he informed her) he would plight her hand
To young Lord Charles, his neighbour's son and heir;
"For it is time, my dear, that you should wed
One like Don Charles, a friend and lord," he said.

Yet, seeing white dismay upon her face,
He said, "Be calm; the wedding cannot be
For some weeks more; you have a little grace,
But still, to-morrow you must start with me,
For you must meet Lord Charles, and come to know
Your luck, dear child, that you should marry so."

All through that day she entertained the guests;
All through the evening, as her father's slave,
She sang and played; but when men sought their rests,
Even as the thin ghost treads the church's nave
She crept out of the house to tell her man,
Laurence, her loved one, of her father's plan.

She reached the Bishop's house in the dead night.
Far off, the dogs barked; then a noise of bells
Chimed, and the abbey quire shewed a light
Where sleepy monk to monk the office tells.
Lorenzo's lamp still burned; he paced his room;
His shadow like a great bat flitted gloom.

There she stood crouched. Two drunken friends
went by
Singing, "I feel inclined." She drew her breath.
All the bright stars were merry in the sky.
She called to Laurence, then, as white as death,
She yearned and prayed. His feet upon the stair
Creaked, a bolt clocked and then her man was
there.

She told her tale (a bitter tale to both),
Then Laurence said, "Since it has come to this,
This must decide me, and my priestly oath
Must now be broken. I have done amiss
Loving you thus in secret; now our sin
Must front the world; a new time must begin.

I have long known that such a break would come.
I cannot longer serve this Church of ours,
That sees red crime committed and is dumb,
And strows an atheist's path with holy flowers.
We two will fly, to start another life
Far from this wicked town, as man and wife.

And if the life be hard, it still will be
A life together, and our own, and all
That life can offer me is you with me.
If you are with me, let what may befall."
"I, too, say that," Camilla said, "Where two
Love to the depths, what evil can men do?"

They looked a long look in each other's eyes;
Then hand in hand they put aside the past,
Father, and priestly vows; for love is wise,
Love plays for life, love stakes upon the cast,
Love is both blind and brave, love only knows
Beauty in the night a little flame that blows.

When the great gates were opened, and the carts
Set out upon the road, those two were there
Bound for the West with quiet in their hearts.
The beauty on them made the carters stare.
There in the West they taught a little school ;
And she was glad, poor soul, and he, poor fool.

* * * * *

This flight, being known, amused the town awhile.
Camilla's father raged and begged that both
Might be arraigned, she for unfilial guile,
He for the breaking of his priestly oath.
The Bishop sighed, Lord Rosas laughed, and soon
The interest died ; it did not live a moon.

But in a neighbouring state some men there were,
Exiled by Rosas, or his refugees,
Who, safe but starving, lived and plotted there,
Losing no chance of working him disease ;
These heard the tale and in their hate they cried
" Here is a weapon that shall bate his pride."

So, in a journal printed at their cost,
They wrote, how public morals had decayed
Since Rosas came, how the land's soul was lost,
"Witness this priest who has seduced a maid,
Child of a noble, yet is not pursued,
Punished nor chid by lord or multitude.

This (so they wrote) is only due to him
Whose bloody rule defiles the suffering land;
By his example is our honour dim,
Church, maiden virtue, nothing, can withstand
His power for evil. By this single crime
The world will know us rotting in our slime."

This, being read, was quoted far and wide
In many lands, with many details more
Of this rebelling chaplain and his bride,
"Lord Rosas' shame, the country's running sore,"
Till, having walked the world, the story came
Back to Lord Rosas like a ravening flame.

He, who had laughed to hear it, foamed with rage
To see it counted as his own disgrace;
But, having read it through, he turned the page,
Sighed, as though sad, and with a smiling face
Called on the Bishop with a gift of gold
"For orphan babes, the lamblings of your fold."

And, as his way was when he chose, his talk
Was sweet and gentle, and the Bishop shewed
His English lilies flowering in the walk,
Which Rosas praised: the Bishop overflowed
With holy joy when Rosas deigned to say
"O, that our souls might be as white as they."

Then, after vespers, when his coach was called
Lord Rosas said, "About this erring priest
Your chaplain Laurence; you are doubtless galled,
Nay, deeply pained; but men will soon have ceased
To mock about it; for itself, let be—
But they are both so young, it touches me.

You liked the lad?" "All like him. "And the girl?"
"All loved Camilla." "Could not two old friends
Help two young souls whose hearts are in a whirl?
Their future lives may make complete amends
For any error now, if you and I
Help them in this their trouble. Shall we try?"

The Bishop said, that he was deeply touched
To hear such Christian words, that he would strive
To reach these children whom mistakes had smutched,
"To bring them peace and save their souls alive."
"I, too, will strive," said Rosas; "let us learn
First, where they are, and urge them to return.

Now that their first hour's madness must be over
They must a little crave for what was life
Before their fall, and hunger to recover
Comrade or friend, even as man and wife.
Who were your chaplain's friends before the fall?"
"A priest," the Bishop said, "from Donegal.

The priest Concannon was Lorenzo's friend;
He may have heard where they have pitched their tent;
He lodges in the parish: shall I send?"
"No, I will write," said Rosas; so he went
Home to his palace, and in a little space
Concannon was before him face to face.

And what with wine and flattery and deceit
He turned Concannon's head and made him tell
The name of those young runaways' retreat
Where they taught school beneath the Mission bell.
Lord Rosas said, "When they return to town
We two will back them till they live it down."

So thinking that the pair were now forgiven,
But for some penance and a reprimand,
Concannon left him, giving thanks to heaven
That mercy's spirit governed in the land.
"They will return," he said, "and wed, and make
Amends for all this passion of mistake."

But when he left, Lord Rosas called his guard
To gaol his daughter ; then, when she was fast,
He sent a troop of lancers riding hard
To seize those lovers ; ere the night was past
Those two poor souls on whom the world had risen
Were chained like thieves and carted to a prison.

But there their guardian, seeing their estate,
Two gently nurtured souls of no proved crime,
Knocked off their irons, and let women wait
On poor Camilla who was near her time.
He lent her music, and with fruit and flowers
And pleasant talk amused some bitter hours.

But in the midnight, as he slept, there came
A man from Rosas, with a sealed command
Which ran, " Take out those lovers without shame,
Before the dawn, and shoot them out of hand.
This is your warrant. Rosas." This he read
Shocked to the heart, but tumbling from his bed

He called his men to change the courier's horse,
Then risking place and life, he wrote to say
" I have your Lordship's order, but perforce
Wait confirmation, ere I can obey.
These two are boy and girl ; You cannot mean
To kill these two, whatever they have been."

He sent this letter to his lord, and then
Took horse himself, because he hoped to plead
With Rosas' daughter, for full many men
Had wrought that gentle soul to intercede
For them, in trouble ; but he rode in vain ;
She was imprisoned and he lost his pain.

But writing down his news, he bribed her guard
To carry it to her ; they took the bribe,
Then tore his note and flung it in the yard
Under his eyes, and mocked him with a gibe.
" No messages will go to her," they said,
" Until your friend, the dirty White, is dead."

When this had failed, he bribed a man to bear
A letter to Lord Rosas in his room,
Pleading Camilla's state. To his despair
The answer came, "Baptise the woman's womb;
Let her drink holy water and then die.
Shoot them at dawn, or hang for mutiny."

One of the Stranglers Gang, who once had known
Camilla's father, brought this final word,
Adding, "Be wise; let sleeping dogs alone.
Do as he bids, for it would be absurd
To disobey, it could not save the two,
Even for a day, and he would murder you."

So, giving up all hope, he took his horse;
But, as he rode, another scheme seemed fair,
"Even now," he said, "things need not take their course;
Her father may appeal," but coming there
He found her father gone, two days before,
To France (they told him) to return no more.

He turned away, but then, one other chance
Remained, to beg the Bishop to appeal;
But some great suit of church inheritance
Had taken him from town. The whetted steel
Wanted its blood. "So they must die," he cried.
And as he rode he felt death run beside.

So in the dawn, the drummers beat the call,
And those poor children, wakened to be killed,
Were taken out and placed against a wall
Facing the soldiers; then the bell was stilled
That had been tolling, and a minute's space
Was given for their farewells and last embrace.

And Laurence said, "Camilla, we shall be
In death together. In some other life,
If not in this, dear, you will be with me.
O my sweet soul, O my beloved wife,
You come to this through me. O my sweet friend,
My love has brought you to this shameful end."

"Not shameful," said Camilla, "All I did
I have done proudly. As I have begun,
So let me end. What human laws forbid
By love's intenser canon we have done.
Let love's intenser purpose heal the smart
At having done with this poor timorous heart.

I would have loved this little child in me
To suck my breast and clap its little hands,
And rest its little body on my knee,
And be like you; but now the running sands
Come to an end, and we must die, my own.
So be it; we have loved unto the bone."

Then hand in hand they faced the firing squad
Who shot them dead into their waiting graves,
Love for each other was all the wealth they had,
Love that atones, the steady star that saves,
Love that, when shattering bullets broke them
blind,
Lit them a path and linked them mind to mind.

* * * * *

ROSAS

When the dog's pity of their death was told,
Lord Rosas straight proclaimed, "I have upheld
This country's morals, as I shall uphold.
There they lie dead, those wicked who rebelled.
I have made pure the country's spotted fame."
The country read the story and was tame.

But man by man, they crept out of the land
Day after day, till there were thousands fled
Who in their exile, swore them to a band
Not to return save over Rosas dead.
Though they lodged earthen like the naked worm
This tale of those poor lovers kept them firm.

Thousands they were and daily they increased
With arms and faith, until their multitude
Fell on Lord Rosas as the supping east
Falls on the barrens where the spirits brood.
They came resolved to kill him or to die,
"Remember those poor lovers," was their cry

When Rosas heard their clamour he prepared
His Gaucho lancers. From a rolling hill
Outside the city, all the plain lies bared,
Cornfields, and waters turning many a mill,
Cities and woodlands, and a distance dim;
There Rosas watched his Gauchos fight for him.

But from the sworn attackers came a shout
"Remember those poor lovers," and their charge
Scattered the Gaucho lancers in a rout,
And chased their remnants to the river marge.
Then Rosas turned his horse and rode alone
To some mean dockyard where he was not known.

There, casting loose his horse, he bought a coat
Fit for a sailor, and in this new dress
Shipped as a seaman in a cargo-boat
Then leaving port, for England, as I guess.
There on her deck that night he took his stand
And looked his last upon his native land.

ROSAS

He died in England many a year ago ;
His daughter, too; both lie in English soil.
They say that great moon-daisies love to grow
Over Camilla, and with loving toil
Soldiers who drill there train the rose-tree boughs
Over the daisies on their narrow house.

A white rose on Camilla and a red
Over Don Laurence, and the branches meet
Mingling their many blossoms overhead
Drawing the bees, and when the sun is sweet
In April there, the little children lay
" Gifts for the pretty lovers " on the clay.

THE LOCKED CHEST

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

(*From a Tale in the Laxdaelasaga*)

PERSONS

THORD GODDI	- -	*A Farmer*
THOROLF	- - -	*Cousin of Vigdis*
INGIALD	- - -	*A Lord*
SOLDIERS	- - -	*Adherents of Ingiald*
VIGDIS GODDI	- -	*Wife of Thord*

SCENE: *Iceland*

THE LOCKED CHEST

SCENE: *A room. A chest used as a bench. A table, etc.* VIGDIS *embroidering a cloth.*

VIGDIS

[*Singing.*]

My love is drowned in the Lowlands,
Away. Heigho.
My love is drowned in the Lowlands,
Lowlands no more.

[*Enter* THORD GODDI]

Well, Thord. I hope you had a good market.

[*Sings.*]

His hair is cold with the seaweed,
Away. Heigho.
His hair is cold with the seaweed,
Lowlands no more.

Come and sit down by the fire, won't you?

[*Sings.*]

O my love is drowned in the Lowlands,
Away——

THORD

For Heaven's sake, stop it.

VIGDIS

Stop what?

THORD

That caterwauling.

VIGDIS

Caterwauling?

THORD

I'm not going to have that howling when I've got a headache——

VIGDIS

I'm sorry I sang when you had a headache. I didn't know.

THORD

I've always got a headache.

VIGDIS

I'm sorry, Thord.

THORD

O, don't "sorry" me. If you're so sorry as all that there'd have been a nice supper ready. But there. It's always the way.

VIGDIS

Let me get you your supper.

THORD

O, I don't want it now, thanks. I couldn't eat it. Why wasn't it ready for me the moment I came in?

VIGDIS

But, Thord. My dear man.

THORD

How many more times am I to tell you I won't be "my deared" when I've a headache?

VIGDIS

I'm sorry, Thord.

THORD

If you knew how much it aggravated. But there. You only do it to drive me mad.

VIGDIS

I don't, Thord.

THORD

Contradict me. Do. That's right. Contradict me. I suppose you'll say next—— But there, it's always the way.

VIGDIS

Thord!

THORD

Now, why wasn't supper ready the moment I came in?

VIGDIS

You said you'd be home late, Thord, and that supper wasn't to be till half-past seven.

THORD

You might have known the fair would be a bad one.

VIGDIS

Was the fair a bad one?

THORD

O, use your sense. Use your sense, woman.

VIGDIS

But I do, Thord.

THORD

Would I be here at this time if the fair had been a good one? You know perfectly well I shouldn't.

VIGDIS

I'm so sorry, Thord.

THORD

[*Growling.*] Yes, so that you might have more money to spend on jewelry. [*He sits down.*] I'm tired.

VIGDIS

Let me help you pull your boots off. [*She pulls a boot and drops it.*]

THORD

O, for Heaven's sake.

Didn't I tell you I'd got a headache? But there. No, I'll take off the other myself. I'm tired to death.

VIGDIS

Let me give you a nip of brandy.

THORD

Brandy? With a headache? You know brandy nearly kills me. Now do for Heaven's sake leave me alone.

VIGDIS

You're tired, Thord. You're tired. Lie down on the chest, and rest till supper. You're tired to death.

THORD

I wouldn't be tired if I wasn't driven half mad by your tongue. A plague take all wives and all fairs.

VIGDIS

Tell me about the fair, Thord, if you're not too tired.

THORD

I've already told you about the fair.

VIGDIS

Were there many people?

THORD

Enough to fill a graveyard. I'd be glad to have the burying of some of them.

VIGDIS

What's the news?

THORD

News? What d'ye want with news?

VIGDIS

But I like to hear what's going on. What were they talking of?

THORD

What were who talking of?

VIGDIS

The people at the fair.

THORD

None of their business. That's what they were talking of. They were talking of a murder.

VIGDIS

A murder!

THORD

[*Shouting.*] A murder. Can't you pay attention when I'm talking to you? I said a murder. Why don't you listen?

VIGDIS

Who has been murdered?

THORD

I didn't say anyone had been murdered.

VIGDIS

But you said——

THORD

But I said nothing of the sort. There was a fight down on the beach and a man was killed.

VIGDIS

What man?

THORD

That big swaggering fellow Hall.

VIGDIS

Hall? Brother of Ingiald?

THORD

Yes. Brother of Ingiald. A lout he was, too.

VIGDIS

Who killed him?

THORD

Does it matter to you who killed him?

VIGDIS

No. Only I would like to know.

THORD

You're always wanting to know. You want to know too much. What was Hall to you?

VIGDIS

Nothing. My cousin was his partner. That's all I know about him. And they used to quarrel all day, as though they were man and wife.

THORD

I suppose that's meant for me. Well, I don't know who killed him. But I know this.

VIGDIS

What?

THORD

I pity the man who did it.

VIGDIS

Why?

THORD

Have you any sense at all, woman?

VIGDIS

I don't see why he should be pitied.

THORD

Well, I do. D'you suppose a great man like Ingiald will let his brother's murderer escape?

VIGDIS

But you said it was a fight on the beach.

THORD

I said. I said. I said. Nag. Nag. Nag. Even if it were, d'you suppose a man like Ingiald would let the man escape? Ingiald'll hunt him down. That murderer's a doomed man.

VIGDIS

Poor fellow, I say.

THORD

Serve him right, I say. Serve him right.

VIGDIS

I wonder who it was.

THORD

It isn't known who it was. Two or three are suspected.

VIGDIS

I hope it wasn't cousin Thorolf.

THORD

Well, if it was, he must take the consequences.

VIGDIS

That man Hall was a sad man to work with. I hate to speak ill of a dead man; but he had a bad name.

THORD

He was a drunken boor.

VIGDIS

He went for Thorolf with an axe once.

THORD

Well, I pity the man who went for *him* with an axe. Is supper ever going to come at all? Or am I to stay talking here all night?

VIGDIS

Won't you go in and lie down, Thord? Supper will be ready in a moment.

THORD

How can I go in and lie down? You know perfectly well I've got to see to the chores. I can't trust the hired men.

VIGDIS

I'll run out and see to the chores, Thord.

THORD

You? I can't trust you to get supper, let alone do the chores. No. I must sacrifice myself. I've got a headache and I'm half dead. But there, its always the way. I must do a thing myself if I want it done. Give me my boots.

VIGDIS

Let me go, Thord. I'll see the cows driven in and milked.

THORD

Give—me—my—boots. Don't I tell you? Don't tell me what you'll do and what you'll not do. There [*puts on boots*], I thought when I came in I'd have time to rest myself. But there. It's always the way. [*Turns to go out.*] What are you glowering there for? Go—and—get—the supper ready. When you've worn me to my grave I suppose you'll be glad. You do make me so mad.

VIGDIS

I'll have supper directly, Thord.

THORD

You do make me so mad. But there. It's always the way. [*He goes out.*]

VIGDIS

It's a pity we've no child, Thord and I. They say a child is a great sweetener in a house. If

we'd a child, perhaps he wouldn't take on so. Ah well. It wasn't like this when we were courting. I must get this table clear. If I'd had a child now, he'd have been different. That's what a wife must expect. Nothing but "O my head-ache," and "O if I'm not tired." I only wanted to hear about the murder. It's not so often we get a murder to talk about. The way he talks you'd think we had one every day. So Hall is murdered. I never liked that man. I wonder who killed him. Well. There's one comfort. My cousin Thorolf wouldn't go for to kill a man. Not even Hall, he wouldn't. He wouldn't kill a fly, my cousin Thorolf wouldn't. He's like a blessed babe. [*The door at the back is knocked violently.*] Bless us and save us.

VOICE

Let me in. Let me in. Vigdis. Thord.

VIGDIS

Who's there?

VOICE

Open. Open. For God's sake let me in.

VIGDIS

Enter. If you be of God.

VOICE

Open.

VIGDIS

[*Running to door.*] Come in. Who's there? [*Enter* THOROLF.] Thorolf. Cousin Thorolf. How are you?

THOROLF

Stand back. Don't kiss me.

VIGDIS

What's the matter, Thorolf?

THOROLF

Stand back. You keep your hands off.

VIGDIS

But I'm your cousin, Thorolf.

THOROLF

Yes. But perhaps you won't be quite so glad to be my cousin when you hear the news.

VIGDIS

What news, Thorolf?

THOROLF

About Hall.

VIGDIS

He's dead. What d'ye mean, Thorolf?

THOROLF

I killed him, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

You, Thorolf?

THOROLF

He cheated me. O, but I can't go into that. So we fought, and I killed him. It was a fair fight. I didn't want to kill him, God knows.

VIGDIS

Men have no sense when they have swords in their hands.

THOROLF

It was a fair fight.

VIGDIS

I'm not blaming you, Thorolf. It seems men must kill each other from time to time. But what are you going to do now?

THOROLF

What indeed?

VIGDIS

You know what it means. You must know what it means. Do they know you did it?

THOROLF

Ingiald will know by this.

VIGDIS

But you know what Ingiald is. He'll be after you to-night, now. Now. What will you do? What will you do, Thorolf?

THOROLF

You're my cousin, Vigdis?

VIGDIS

Of course I'm your cousin.

THOROLF

You wouldn't cast me off? You don't think worse of me? I mean, he had his sword. It was fair and square.

VIGDIS

Of course I won't cast you off. Men have no sense at any time. But when they have swords in their hands — it might happen to anyone.

THOROLF

Vigdis. Will you stand by me?

VIGDIS

You're my cousin, Thorolf. There's my hand. But don't waste time like this. Where will you hide? Who can shelter you against Ingiald? The king himself could hardly do it. It's death to shelter you. Where will you go? Think. Think. Where will you go?

THOROLF

I was thinking perhaps you would shelter me.

VIGDIS

I, Thorolf?

THOROLF

You and Thord.

VIGDIS

And Thord?

THOROLF

I was thinking perhaps you would.

VIGDIS

Against Ingiald?

THOROLF

Until I could get a ship. Only till I could get a ship.

VIGDIS

Against a man like Ingiald?

THOROLF

I know it's a risk, dear. I know it's a risk.

VIGDIS

You know, Thorolf, my man Thord isn't much of a warrior.

THOROLF

It wouldn't be for long, dear. If I could lie low a night or two——

VIGDIS

What should we be, against Ingiald?

THOROLF

If we could just put him off the track, dear, then I could slip down to Broadfirth and get a ship. It would only be a night or two.

VIGDIS

Thord is Thord. And I'm only a woman, and women aren't much good in a case of this sort.

THOROLF

Let me stay, Vigdis. Will you?

VIGDIS

I wish I could think of a plan.

THOROLF

Where else can I go?

VIGDIS

Go? You won't go anywhere. You'll just stay here, where you are. Don't worry yourself about that. It's Ingiald and Thord I'm thinking of.

THOROLF

My God, Vigdis, you're good. I'll kiss you for that.

VIGDIS

Oh, none of your nonsense, now. This is no kissing matter. No, you can't stay in here. Let go my hand, or I'll box your ears. Come this way, now. I'll shut you up in the sheep-fold. Quickly, now, before my husband comes. [*Goes out at side door.*]

THOROLF

I've only got to put Ingiald off the track, dear. Old Hrut will get me a ship.

VIGDIS

Put Ingiald off the track first, my friend. We'll think of the ship later. Come along.

[*Exeunt.*]

[*The other side door opens, and re-enter* THORD.]

THORD

Vigdis. Vigdis. Is supper ready yet? Now if that isn't too bad. What's the woman thinking

of? Vigdis, I say. It's not enough that I have a headache, and get fairly fratted to death, but I'm to be kept waiting for my supper. Vigdis. Vigdis, I say. [*Enter* VIGDIS.]

VIGDIS

What is it, Thord?

THORD

What is it? Supper. Where's supper? Why on earth isn't supper ready?

VIGDIS

I've had a visitor, Thord. A guest.

THORD

A guest, eh. Who invited him?

VIGDIS

No one invited him. He's a sort of a relation of mine.

THORD

So it is a he. How long am I to be tortured with him?

VIGDIS

I'd like him to stay for some time. If you don't mind, Thord.

THORD

You know I mind. You know as well as I do I can't abide strangers in the house. They make this house just like an inn. Except that they never pay for what they have. I will not put up with it. It's enough that I'm half mad with headache, but I must have a stranger in the house. But there. It's always the way. Who is this stranger? Is he respectable?

VIDGIS

He's a sort of relation of mine. I told you just now.

THORD

A relation. If it had been a stranger I wouldn't have minded; but to have a relation. And I shall have to be civil to him. Vigdis, I do think you might have had a little thought of me. But

there. You think of no one but yourself. It's always the way with you women.

VIGDIS

It won't be for long, Thord.

THORD

I tell you what it is, Vigdis. If he's respectable he may stay the night and go on before breakfast. If he's one of these rowdy fellows, or if he's in trouble, I'll not have him near the place. I'll put the dogs on him myself.

VIGDIS

You cannot, Thord. I've already taken him in. I can't go back on my word. I've promised him shelter now.

THORD

Shelter?

VIGDIS

You see he's in trouble.

THORD

What trouble? Who is he, once for all?

VIGDIS

Cousin Thorolf.

THORD

Thorolf! What's he been doing? He's an idle blackguard, Thorolf.

VIGDIS

He's not.

THORD

He is, I say. Don't contradict. What's he been doing?

VIGDIS

There was . . . It was . . . It was a fair fight, Thord.

THORD

A—fair—fight. You—don't—mean——

VIGDIS

Down on the beach.

THORD

Not . . . No . . . Not Hall?

VIGDIS

Yes. He killed Hall.

THORD

Ingiald's brother?

VIGDIS

Ingiald's brother.

THORD

And you've been such a fool as to take him in. To take in Hall's murderer. Ingiald's brother's murderer.

VIGDIS

It was a fair fight, Thord.

THORD

It—was—a—fair fight. A—fair—fight. Ingiald's brother. A fair fight.

VIGDIS

They fought with swords.

THORD

In my house. Here. Ingiald's brother's murderer. And you've let him in. Where is he?

VIGDIS

In the sheep-fold at the back of the house, for the present. That's a good place. They'd never look among the sheep.

THORD

My head is like the seven mills of Milltown. In my house. O, my head. O miserable man. It'll be my death. It's not enough that I must have a headache, and come home tired out, but I must have Ingiald down on me. He'll burn the house. He will. He will. I know Ingiald. He'll burn the house. He's sure to find out. And if he doesn't burn the house he'll put a blood-fine on me. He'll fine me a flock of sheep. It's not enough that I'm fratted to death and find no supper ready, but I must lose my cattle and be murdered in my bed. But there, it's always the way.

VIGDIS

You'll be nothing of the sort. Have pity on poor Thorolf.

THORD

Pity. Let poor Thorolf show a little pity on me. I'm a ruined man. Ingiald will drag me up and down by the hair. He'll hit me in the ribs

with his great fists. He will. He will. I know Ingiald. And you go and take in a murderer. A murderer. If it had been a murder of some common man I wouldn't have minded. But the murderer of Ingiald's brother.

VIGDIS

I tell you it was not a murder. Thorolf's no murderer. He's like a woman in most things, Thorolf is. I tell you it was not a murder. It was a fair fight.

THORD

So Ingiald'll say. Yes, he'll say. I'll take your sheep, he'll say. And them nice cows too, Thord, he'll say. It was a nice fair fight, he'll say, so now I'll burn you in your bed. I know Ingiald. Ahoo. Ahoo.

VIGDIS

Well. I wouldn't be a cry baby. There's worse things than being burned in our beds. Come. Be a man, Thord. One would think you were afraid of dying.

THORD

O, hold your nagging tongue, for God's sake. Ahoo. Ahoo.

VIGDIS

It will all come right, Thord. Look. I'll get you some nice supper.

THORD

You'll drive me mad in another minute. Supper, Ingiald's knife'll be the only supper I shall have. Hold your nagging tongue, and let me die in peace.

VIGDIS

It's very likely that we'll have Ingiald here before long. He's not a man to wait on the road. He comes like an eagle, Ingiald does.

THORD

O what shall I do? What shall I do?

VIGDIS

Do? Put a bold face on it. There's no danger where there's no fear. Look him in the face and tell him to walk out of here.

THORD

He may be coming now. Look out at the door, Vigdis. Is he coming?

VIGDIS

There's someone coming. It's a party of men. A dozen, quite.

THORD

O, I'm not fit to die. I'm not.

VIGDIS

Be a man. They're coming quickly. They'll be here in a minute. Yes. It's Ingiald. There's his red cloak. He's walking ahead of the rest. Be a man now, Thord. It'll be all right.

THORD

O! O!

VIGDIS

Can you think of any better plan than the sheep-fold?

THORD

O!

VIGDIS

O, why didn't I marry a man? You don't think he'd look in the sheep-fold, with all the sheep in it? I'm sure he wouldn't.

THORD

O, Thorolf's all right. It's myself I'm thinking of. It's myself. O!

VIGDIS

I wonder you aren't ashamed.

THORD

I was getting on so well. I'd have been able to buy Rapp's field next year——

VIGDIS

Think of poor Thorolf. Brace up, man. Ingiald'll suspect at once if he sees you like that. What's your life? What's my life? It's our guest's life that matters.

THORD

An idle vagrant's life better than mine? If it had been the King, now.

VIGDIS

Thord, brace yourself. Thorolf's safe in the sheep-fold. Ingiald can prove nothing. Your guest's life depends on the way you look. Don't flop there like a done-out old gather-up of a bachelor. Swell your chest out. Put a scowl on, like a Viking. That's better. Here they are.

[*A knock at the door.*]

THORD

O, I'm a dead man.

VIGDIS

O, I could shake you. For Thorolf's sake, perk yourself.

[*A knock.*]

Come in. Go and open the door, Thord.

THORD

I can't. How can you ask me to open the door?

[*A knock.*]

VIGDIS

Go on, Thord. Go. Open, man.

THORD

Vigdis. You don't mind. You open. Your nerves aren't like mine.

VIGDIS

Quick, Thord. It's for the host to open.

VOICES

Open within there. Open in the name of the law.

VIGDIS

I must open, then. [*Goes to the door.*] Come in, come in.

[*Enter* INGIALD *and* MEN-AT-ARMS]

INGIALD

God save all here. Thank you, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

My man's not quite himself, to-night, Lord Ingiald.

INGIALD

I'm sorry to hear that. What pin pricks now, Thord?

THORD

Ah. Oh.

INGIALD

[*Looking keenly at both of them.*] I should have thought life was pretty quiet up here. No fighting. No gambling. No anxiety——

VIGDIS

My man gets run down, Lord Ingiald. It's going to these fairs that does it. I've known him come home in a way of speaking, and he'd be all cold, like a dead man. It's the nerves and that on the brain. [*A pause.*] What could I do for you, Lord Ingiald? Will you not sit down? Is there anything you would like to take? It's not often we see you up here. Why, I don't think I've seen you, not since last October twelvemonth.

INGIALD

No. I daresay not. [*He goes over to* THORD *and bangs him on the shoulder.*]

THORD

Ow. What is it, Ingiald? Don't.

INGIALD

I want to have a talk with you, my friend.

THORD

A—a talk. O yes. Yes, that. Yes. Very nice.

INGIALD

[*To his men.*] Go out and stand by the door. Don't budge till I tell you.

MEN

Ay, ay, sir.

[*Exeunt*]

VIGDIS

Wouldn't your men be pleased to take a drop of something? You've surely not come all the way from Sheep Isles. What is it we could do for you, Lord Ingiald? Perhaps you would let me hear it. My man's not himself to-night. Were you wanting any hands to help get your harvest in? Tell me what it is.

INGIALD

Thank you, Vigdis. I want to have a talk with Thord, here.

THORD

I—I'm so ill, Ingiald. It's the weather. Vigdis will do any business. My head. My head is bad. I'm a martyr to my head in wet weather.

INGIALD

I know what it is. My own head gives me tortures. But I must have a talk with you. Perhaps you would ask your wife to mull me a little ale?

VIGDIS

You must let me mull it in here, then. The kitchen fire's out.

INGIALD

I should be delighted; but my nerves can't bear the smell of ale being mulled. It always upsets me. [*To* THORD.] Perhaps you would ask your wife to—to look at the sunset. Most beautiful sunset, outside.

VIGDIS

Yes, we were looking at it this last half hour.

INGIALD

I see. Well. Vigdis. I must talk to Thord here privately. Will you go into the next room? I won't keep you long.

VIGDIS

Certainly, Lord Ingiald. Now, I won't have you telling my man about any of those naughty baggages at Reykjavik. He knows quite enough, already.

INGIALD

I won't mention a single baggage. [*He calls to a* SOLDIER.] Erik, just attend the lady for a moment. [*Aside to* SOLDIER.] See she doesn't leave the room.

VIGDIS

I know you men. [*She tries to catch* THORD'S *eye.*] I'll make him repeat every word you say. [*She goes out unconcernedly.*]

INGIALD

[*Aside.*] Well. If you're not a wonder. [*Sharply.*] Now, Thord, my friend, I've got only one thing to say to you. Where's Thorolf?

THORD

Thorolf.

INGIALD

Well?

THORD

Which Thorolf would that be?

INGIALD

You know quite well which Thorolf.

THORD

O, you mean old Thorolf of the Ridge? Ah yes. A fat man. He——

INGIALD

Now, Thord. [*Glares at him.*]

THORD

O, young Thorolf. Koll o' Dales' lad. He goes to school, now.

INGIALD

[*Rapping the table.*] Thord.

THORD

Don't, Ingiald. You put a fellow out so.

INGIALD

Where's Thorolf? Vigdis's cousin. Your cousin Thorolf.

THORD

Ha, ha, ha! *That* Thorolf. Yes. An idle blackguard. Yes.

INGIALD

Yes. That Thorolf. Where is he?

THORD

I've not seen him, Ingiald.

INGIALD

I suppose you've not heard about him, either?

THORD

No.

INGIALD

Not? Sure?

THORD

No. I mean yes. Of course I've heard about him.

INGIALD

About what he has done to-day?

THORD

I didn't know he did anything to-day.

INGIALD

You heard about my brother?

THORD

Your poor brother, Hall? Yes, I was truly grieved. I was quite upset.

INGIALD

That's what Thorolf did.

THORD

Thorolf?

INGIALD

Now where is he?

THORD

Your brother?

INGIALD

I see. You won't answer.

THORD

Now don't be hasty, Ingiald. You're so hasty. You don't give me a chance. What is it you want to know?

INGIALD

Where is Thorolf?

THORD

I've not seen him, Ingiald. How should I know where Thorolf is?

INGIALD

He was seen coming towards this house.

THORD

Towards this house?

INGIALD

Only an hour ago.

THORD

Thorolf?

INGIALD

No more talk, my friend. Where is he?

THORD

I don't know, Ingiald. I don't know.

INGIALD

You lying knave. You creeping worm. You dog of ——. I'll ram this scabbard down your throat. You say you don't know. Where is he? Any more of your lies and I'll squeeze your lying tongue off.

THORD

Don't, Ingiald. Don't. You're hurting. Don't, man.

INGIALD

Well. No more of your lies, then.

THORD

Now you've hurt me. I shall have a sore throat for a week.

INGIALD

Do you good. [*A pause.*] Now then, Thorolf's here. Isn't he? Hey?

THORD

Yes, Ingiald.

INGIALD

I thought we should come to it sooner or later. See what comes of being patient. So he's here. Hidden somewhere?

THORD

Yes, Ingiald.

INGIALD

Where is he hidden?

THORD

O, but I couldn't tell you that. If I told you that I'd have to leave the country. No one would speak to me, if I told you that.

INGIALD

That's nothing to do with me. Now then. Where is he?

THORD

O, I couldn't.

INGIALD

Hey?

THORD

I'd have to leave this farm. Have mercy, Ingiald.

INGIALD

Mercy, eh?

THORD

I couldn't bear it. I'm not strong, Ingiald. My head.

INGIALD

D'ye see this little knife of mine?

THORD

O, don't, Ingiald. Ingiald, you don't mean. Ingiald, I'd have to leave the country if I told you.

INGIALD

Look here, Thord. I'm going to get Thorolf before I go. Let's understand each other.

THORD

O, yes, Ingiald. I'll do anything. I'll say anything. But I can't tell you where he is. I can't. I'd have to leave the country.

INGIALD

Well. You needn't tell me where he is. Not in so many words. D'ye understand?

THORD

O, Ingiald.

INGIALD

Let's come to some arrangement. You don't want your neighbours to call you a traitor. I understand that. You don't want me to burn your house down, or to stick this knife into you. I understand that, too. Well. You give up Thorolf to me quietly.

THORD

I can't, Ingiald. They'd know. They'd know. Vigdis would tell them.

INGIALD

I don't say "betray him," you silly gowk.

THORD

But what then, Ingiald?

INGIALD

Give me some hint where he is, so that I can find him. I'll pretend to search the house, and light on him, as it were, by chance. Come now.

THORD

But——

INGIALD

Come now. D'ye see this bag? [*Produces a purse.*]

THORD

Yes.

INGIALD

D'ye hear it? Eh? Chink. Eh? Chink? Where is he?

THORD

I couldn't.

INGIALD

Come now. Hark? Three silver marks. Eh? Just whisper. Where? Come now.

THORD

Three silver marks.

INGIALD

Three silver marks. You needn't say it right out. Hear it jingle.

THORD

It's a lot of money.

INGIALD

You could do with it, eh? Come now, old man, where is he?

THORD

Let me weigh it in my hand.

INGIALD

Certainly. Here you are. Now then. Whisper here. Where is he? Tell me where he is. Where is he? Is he in the chest here?

THORD

No, not in the chest.

INGIALD

No? What is in the chest?

THORD

Things of Vigdis's.

INGIALD

Is he upstairs, then? Eh? Upstairs?

THORD

No. He's not upstairs.

INGIALD

Outside? Eh?

THORD

[*Putting the bag on the table.*] Ingiald.

INGIALD

Yes. Well. What is it?

THORD

You won't take it to heart my hiding him?

INGIALD

No. No. Of course I won't.

THORD

Swear you won't. You won't fine me? Nor take my cattle?

INGIALD

Not if you tell me where he is.

THORD

You'll search the house first, Ingiald. In pretence?

INGIALD

Yes. I'll pretend to search the house. And then?

THORD

You see that door there?

INGIALD

Yes. Yes. What then?

THORD

You must go through that door. No. No. Go through *this* door, and then round the house.

INGIALD

Yes? Where to? Among the ricks?

THORD

No. Not among the ricks.

INGIALD

In the dairy?

THORD

You might look in the dairy.

INGIALD

Where else, eh?

THORD

Just to the left of the dairy.

INGIALD

The cowbyre, eh?

THORD

No. No. You might look in the cowbyre, though.

INGIALD

Where else?

THORD

Ingiald.

INGIALD

Yes.

THORD

Swear you won't tell anyone. Swear you won't say I told you.

INGIALD

Of course I won't tell anyone.

THORD

You might count the sheep. You understand?

INGIALD

To the left of the dairy, eh?

THORD

To the left of the dairy.

INGIALD

I'll see them counted. Thank'ee, Thord.

THORD

Now, you'll pretend to look upstairs?

INGIALD

Yes. We'll let in Vigdis, now.

THORD

No, not Vigdis, no.

INGIALD

Yes, man. Hey there. Erik!

ERIK

Sir.

INGIALD

Tell the lady to come in.

ERIK

Tell the lady to come in, sir. You may go in now, mum.

[*Enter* VIGDIS]

VIGDIS

Well. Have you had a nice talk?

INGIALD

No. Not so nice as I could have wished, perhaps. Your husband's very low to-night. Excuse me a moment. Hi there. Hrapp, Hoskuld.

SOLDIERS

[*Entering.*] Sir. Sir.

INGIALD

I'm sorry, Vigdis. But I must search the house. Your husband has given me permission. I must look through all the rooms.

VIGDIS

Search my house, indeed.

INGIALD

I won't disarrange it more than can be helped.

VIGDIS

Search my house, indeed. For what will you search my house?

INGIALD

For your cousin Thorolf.

VIGDIS

My—cousin—Thorolf. And why should you want my cousin Thorolf, I should like to know?

INGIALD

Come, Vigdis, I'm sorry. Now don't let's have a scene.

VIGDIS

A scene, indeed. And why should you have a scene? I'm not going to have my house pulled to pieces.

INGIALD

They won't do any harm, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

Harm or no harm, I won't have anyone spying around in my house. I never heard of such impudence. This is *my* house. It isn't Thorolf's house. What d'ye want Thorolf for?

INGIALD

You know perfectly well, Vigdis, what I want Thorolf for.

VIGDIS

[*To* THORD.] And I'm to be insulted in my own house! I wonder you sit there and let your wife be insulted. As for you, Ingiald, for all your lordship, you never had more manners than one brought up in a pigstye. It is what I might expect from you. But as for you, Thord, I'm ashamed of you. Defend your wife, man. Don't let these louts throw the whole house overboard.

INGIALD

[*To his men.*] Upstairs with you. Search every room in the house.

VIGDIS

How dare you insult a woman so? You great captains want humbling. If I were a man now, you wouldn't dare.

ERIK

[*To* INGIALD.] Beg pardon, captain.

INGIALD

What is it?

ERIK

That box, captain. [*Points to chest.*]

INGIALD

Well. What about it?

ERIK

I was thinking he might be in that box.

INGIALD

O, nonsense. Upstairs with you.

[*They all run upstairs.*]

[*To* THORD.] You come, too, Thord. If anything's missing you'll blame my men.

THORD

[*Aside.*] Let Vigdis go, Ingiald. Take Vigdis.

INGIALD

[*Glancing at her.*] No. She suspects nothing. You come.

THORD

No. I don't think she suspects. No, she suspects nothing.

VIGDIS

Where are you going, Thord?

THORD

Upstairs with Ingiald.

VIGDIS

Am I married to a man or to a bleating old sheep with the staggers? Do you call yourself a human being, Thord? [*Aside.*] What's Ingiald going to do?

INGIALD

Come, Thord. Come on, now.

THORD

[*To* VIGDIS.] Get supper ready. Don't stand there.

[*Exit with* INGIALD]

VIGDIS

Get supper ready. Get supper ready. What's he going to do? Why didn't Thord give me a hint? He'll search the sheep-fold. Of course he'll search the sheep-fold. He'll be going to the fold in another minute. Why did I leave him in the sheep-fold? Why did I let him stay at all? What can I do? What can I do? He'll be down in a minute. What's this bag of money? What's this bag of money? Thord's sold him. It's blood money, I know it. What can I do? O, God. What can I do?

THORD

[*Above.*] Vigdis.

VIGDIS

Yes, Thord.

THORD

All right. Nothing. I only wanted to know if you were there.

VIGDIS

What can I do? I know. I know. It's a bare chance. It's a bare chance.

[*She runs softly and swiftly from the room*]

[*In two seconds she returns with* THOROLF]

[*Noise above, and shouts*]

VIGDIS

Quiet. Quiet. Not a whisper.

THOROLF

What shall I do?

VIGDIS

Not a whisper.

THORD

[*Above.*] Vigdis. Are you there still?

VIGDIS

I'm still here, Thord. What's the matter with you? Into the chest, Thorolf. Get into the chest. [*She opens chest.*]

THOROLF

[*Kissing her.*] Good-bye, in case, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

O you silly boy. Get in. I must lock you in. Don't sneeze, for God's sake. Press your upper lip if you want to sneeze. It's a bare chance, Thorolf. [*She locks the chest on him and takes the key. Then she hurriedly and softly puts bread and beer upon the table as for supper.*]

[*Re-enter* INGIALD, THORD, *and* SOLDIERS]

VIGDIS

Well, my lord. Did you find my cousin Thorolf by any chance?

INGIALD

I've not finished looking yet.

VIGDIS

Haven't you? You might look on the dresser there. I would if I were you. Or in the oven. Yes, look in the oven, Ingiald. Show him the oven, Thord.

INGIALD

[*To some of his men.*] Step into the kitchen, and look in the oven. You. Come with me the rest of you. We must look through the farmyard.

VIGDIS

Don't disturb your elder brother, Ingiald.

INGIALD

What elder brother?

VIGDIS

The donkey.

INGIALD

Ah, you're funny, Vigdis. Well, he laughs best who laughs last, *I* say.

[*Exit with* MEN]

VIGDIS

Thord. Thord Goddi.

THORD

Yes, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

What's this bag of money, here?

THORD

Bag of money?

VIGDIS

This bag of money here. What is it?

THORD

It's what I brought from market.

VIGDIS

It's nothing of the sort.

THORD

Oh no. Nor it is.

VIGDIS

Well?

THORD

Well? I suppose Ingiald left it there when he came in.

VIGDIS

Did you see Ingiald leave it there? O, what am I thinking of? [*Aside.*]

THORD

Now for Heaven's sake stop nagging. Hark!

VIGDIS

What is it?

THORD

I thought I heard a noise in the yard. A cry.

VIGDIS

My God. A cry. [*They go to the door.*]

THORD

I hope they won't find him.

VIGDIS

Thank God I did what I could for him. O, may Heaven blind them.

THORD

I'm afraid they're sure to find him. What was that?

VIGDIS

My God. They're brave, aren't they, thirteen to one?

THORD

Didn't you hear a sort of groan then?

VIGDIS

Poor Thorolf. Poor Thorolf.

THORD

We did our best, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

Yes. May God always help you, Thord, as well as you helped Thorolf!

THORD

Yes, I shall always be glad I did my best for him.

VIGDIS

Yes, Thord. I suppose you will be. I hope you will be.

THORD

Poor fellow.

VIGDIS

Poor Thorolf.

THORD

Don't take on, Vigdis. We must all die. Ah. Ah. Come away from the door. Come. [*Cries without.*]

VIGDIS

[*Covering her eyes.*] O, my dear, my dear, O Thorolf, little brown-haired Thorolf.

THORD

There. There. It's all over now.

VIGDIS

O my Thorolf, my cousin Thorolf.

THORD

There. There. Now don't take on. Don't take on; you get on my nerves when you cry like that.

VIGDIS

O, you had brown hair, Thorolf. Bonny hair you had. O my boy, my poor cousin. [*Cries without.*]

THORD

[*Aside.*] They've got him. They've got him. [*He rubs his hands.*] We all owe Heaven a death. Poor Thorolf. Poor fellow. And him so young.

VIGDIS

It was a sight for sore eyes on a sunny morning to see him going over the hills. O Thorolf, you were the joy of a woman's eyes. You were as

stately as a stag. You were as comely as a king's darling. O my boy, my poor cousin, my own dear, my heart's darling, Thorolf!

THORD

And him so young. And such a promising young fellow. To be cut short. Life is but a span. And him so young. Idle, vicious, drunken blackguard, it's a good job you are cut short. [*More noise without.*]

VIGDIS

He had soft brown hair with threads of gold in it like the bright bird's feathers. Now it's dabbled with blood, dabbled with blood, dabbled with blood.

THORD

Dabbled with blood. O! O me!

VIGDIS

O young man, O treasure of the west, O white, comely, handsome Thorolf. Yours will be a cold bride bed under the winter grass.

THORD

O, do for Heaven's sake be quiet.

VIGDIS

A cold bed, a lonely bed, a white bed.

THORD

You'll waste none of our sheets, laying of him out. Let me tell you that.

VIGDIS

Three white lonely candles in a draught, three flames guttering, but you will lie still beneath them, Thorolf.

THORD

Vigdis. Do you want to drive me mad? Have done now.

VIGDIS

O bonny Thorolf. Swimming and rowing and going among young men you were like a king. None could sail a boat like you. No queen ever loosed her hair about a lovelier lover than you. You were courteous, you were kind, you had

strength and beauty, you were brave; now you will lie in the ground, and the sheep will crop the grass there.

THORD

Here. Vigdis. A little of that goes a long way. Thorolf's dead. Here's Ingiald coming back. Hold your noise now, for Heaven's sake.

[*Re-enter* INGIALD *with* MEN]

INGIALD

I've a bone to pick with you, Thord.

VIGDIS

Bring me my dead. Give me my dead, you butchers, you bloody men.

INGIALD

D'ye hear?

VIGDIS

Thirteen to one. Thirteen to one. You butchers. You bloody men. Bring me my dead. Bring me my dead darling. You cowards. You cowards.

INGIALD

What's wrong with *you*, Vigdis?

VIGDIS

Let me look upon the boy's dead face. You butchers. O fair, white face. O white face with the red blood upon it. O my boy, my dear boy, Thorolf.

INGIALD

He'll be a white face when I get him and that's a fact, Vigdis. I'll promise you that much. Thord, I'll wring your ears off.

VIGDIS

Where is my dead lad? You dogs. You butchers. Take me to his corpse.

INGIALD

Your dead lad? There's no dead lad.

VIGDIS

Not dead. O, heaven! [*Pretends to swoon.*]

THORD

What?

INGIALD

I'll tell you what, you creeping rot. You cur. You Judas. What have you done with him?

THORD

Done with him?

INGIALD

With Thorolf. Eh. Where is he? Eh? What have you done with him?

THORD

I've done nothing, Ingiald. Nothing.

INGIALD

Don't tell me you've done nothing.

THORD

I didn't do anything with him.

INGIALD

You lying knave. D'ye dare to sit there and say you haven't got him off?

THORD

I haven't got him off.

INGIALD

You lie.

THORD

How could I have got him off?

INGIALD

How? How do I know how? But I'll know how. I'll flay you alive. I'll skin you and salt you. I'll—I'll—I'll——

THORD

O, don't. Ingiald, I swear—I swear I thought you'd get him.

INGIALD

I tell you, you've got him off.

THORD

I haven't, Ingiald.

INGIALD

[*To his men.*] Look at him. Look at this liar, here. I come here to this liar and tell him I want Thorolf. And he cringes and whines and licks my boots. So I just speak to him kindly,

like a father. I'm always kindly and like a father. I'm too kind: And he cringes and whines, and begs me not to hit him. Only spare my precious hide, he says, and I'll tell you where Thorolf is.

THE MEN

Hear that now. He betrayed him, etc.

INGIALD

Then he wants a little money, for saying where Thorolf is. The money on the table there. Three marks of silver, no less. He'd sell his own mother for a little money. Wouldn't you, eh?

THORD

I wouldn't.

INGIALD

You would, you know it. Three marks of silver you begged. And then you told me to look in the sheep-fold.

THE MEN

Treacherous swine. His own cousin. His own cousin.

INGIALD

And then he sneaks his man off while we're rummaging in the wrong place. And now he expects me to be out three marks of silver.

THE MEN

Tie him to the bull's tail, master, and let's hunt him.

INGIALD

So you'd sell your cousin, would you, and then try to go back on your bargain? [*Going to him.*] Where have you taken Thorolf to? Eh?

THORD

He was in the sheep-fold where I told you, Ingiald. He was. Indeed he was.

INGIALD

O! Was he? And where is he now? Gone to Olaf's, I suppose.

THORD

He may have gone to Olaf's.

THE MEN

Olaf's is a likely place. We'd better go on there at once.

INGIALD

Lord help you, Thord, if we don't get him. Understand? I mean it. Come on there.

A MAN

You never looked in that chest yet, captain.

INGIALD

O yes, that chest. [*He tries lid.*] Where's the key, Thord?

THORD

Ask Vigdis.

INGIALD

Where's the key of this chest, Vigdis?

VIGDIS

Key of the chest, indeed. Who are you to ask for my keys? I'm not going to have you spying in my chests. You and your gang have done harm enough here. You'll get no key. Let that be enough.

INGIALD

Come now. The key.

VIGDIS

I tell you, you shall not have the key.

THE MEN

Break it open, captain.

A MAN

O, let the chest alone. Thorolf'll be safe at Olaf's if we don't hurry.

INGIALD

Give me the key.

THORD

Give up the key at once.

VIGDIS

I tell you, you shall not have the key. You've thrown the house overboard as it is. Get out now. Go.

INGIALD

Give me that key at once, Vigdis.

VIGDIS

[*Flinging key on floor.*] Take it then, and bad luck go with it. Here it is. Now open.

INGIALD

[*Giving it back.*] Thank you. That's all I wanted. Now, Thord. Give back that bag of money.

THORD

O Ingiald, you gave it to me.

INGIALD

Now you will give it back.

THORD

O Ingiald.

VIGDIS

Give it, Thord. Give it, you Judas, you. D'ye think I'll have blood money in the house? Give it up at once.

[*The* MEN *go out and linger at the door*]

INGIALD

Come on now.

VIGDIS

[*Taking money bag.*] I've only one thing to say to you, Ingiald. I say, take your money and get out of my house, now. [*She makes him back to the door.*] Take your dirty blood money. [*She smites him over the face with the money bag and drives him out. She watches them go.*] Go on to Olaf's with you, and try some other Judas. That's all I've to say to you, my lord. [*She turns and unlocks chest. Then, instead of opening, she turns to look at Thord. Thord goes to door and looks out, comes back and sits on chest. Vigdis backs away from him.*]

THORD

Well. They've gone. [*A pause.*] They've gone. [*No answer.*] Can't you answer when I speak to you?

VIGDIS

Yes. I can answer. Listen to me, Thord Goddi. You and I will part from now. You

took money to betray Thorolf, your guest and my cousin. I always knew you for a mean man, now I know you are base and a dastard and a dog. God forgive me, I once loved you. Pah. I let you kiss me. I held you in my arms. There. There. There. Take it. [*She flings her wedding ring at him.*] Now we'll part, my sir. I thank God I never bore you a child.

THORD

[*Laughing nervously.*] I've got a headache. I can't—Ow—[*The chest lid rises.* THORD *leaps from it.* THOROLF *appears.*] Thorolf!

THOROLF

Thorolf!

THORD

Thorolf, I didn't mean—I swear I didn't. I didn't mean. It was only a joke. I'll explain.

THOROLF

Thord. Pah. You're not worth it.

THORD

O Thorolf. You shall have—I'll give you my money. All of it——

THOROLF

Pah. Vigdis, my dear, where are they?

VIGDIS

They've gone, Thorolf. We can slip away to Broadfirth now. It's quite safe. Come. Come. We'll go together, my friend. [*They turn to go.*]

THORD

I'll change my religion.

CURTAIN

Written in 1906.

THE
SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT

THE
SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT

SCENE: *An inn at Dunleary. A parlour.* TIGER ROCHE, *an old, well-preserved man, with his left arm in a sling.*

ROCHE

I've been in seven lost causes. This is the seventh; and it comes to an end like the others. There were good fellows with me. They poured out their lives like water. Good fellows they were. They are all gone now. Shears, and all of them. My God! but they were brave. And to think of those swine at the Castle ruling men like they were! [*He rings the bell.*]

[*Enter* HOSTESS]

Well, what did the ship-captain say?

HOSTESS

There'll be a boat below the door here in half an hour from now.

ROCHE

And he'll engage to land me in France?

HOSTESS

In France itself.

ROCHE

You said half an hour?

HOSTESS

Yes, sir.

ROCHE

So I've half an hour more in Ireland. Half an hour more in Ireland, and then—

Adieu for ever more,
My love,
Adieu for ever more.

Well, there's no sense in sorrow; I may as well have some wine.

HOSTESS

What wine would you like, sir? Claret? Burgundy?

ROCHE

Have you any Miss Taylor?

HOSTESS

Why, sir, that's a common drink. Only sailors drink Miss Taylor.

ROCHE

I drank a cup of Miss Taylor the day I landed at Killala. I would drink it again to the memory of the friends who pledged me in it. [*Soliloquizing.*] It ought not to have failed. But the honest purpose does fail, for it is fighting the knavery of the world. It's a harsh alternative, to fail or be British. Fail, aye, and I'm proud to fail.

Better be trampled out by asses' hooves
Than be the thing the asses' mind approves.

[HOSTESS *goes out and returns with bottle and glass*]

HOSTESS

Here it is, sir.

ROCHE

I thank you.

[HOSTESS *goes out*]

[*Pouring out a glass of wine and holding it up.*] I drink to you, my comrades. You fought a good fight, my comrades. You were spent like water. Your names shall be written in fire.

[*Re-enter* HOSTESS]

HOSTESS

There's some gentlemen coming, sir. Perhaps you'd like to step aside, sir. The cellar's dark, and there's a good place in the henhouse.

ROCHE

I'll stay where I am, thank you.

HOSTESS

It may be dangerous for to stay, sir. One of them's that Major Sirr.

ROCHE

I shall be glad to meet him.

HOSTESS

[*Looking out.*] It may be very dangerous, sir. One of them's that Major Sandys.

ROCHE

O! Who's the third?

HOSTESS

Sir, would you not be advised, since it might be your death? He's the drunken fat man who flogged poor Mr. Wright. I must go out, sir.

[*Exit*]

ROCHE

Old Fitzpatrick! I shall have pleasant company for my last half-hour in Ireland. [*He sits down.*]

[*Enter* MAJOR SIRR, MAJOR SANDYS, *and* THOMAS JUDKIN FITZPATRICK, J.P.]

FITZ.

And so, sir, when he said that, sir, there was no use bothering a jury.

SIRR

Aha. Very good, very good. You are a wag, sir.

FITZ.

Yes, sir, the rebellious dog.

SAND.

All the same, the rebellion's not stamped out. I shall be glad when that new regiment comes in.

SIRR

What new regiment?

SAND.

O, a Kentish regiment. Fencibles and that. They'll be marching through here, by the way. Before we go, I expect.

SIRR

Well, the more the merrier. But all the same, I think we've scotched the rebellion. Let's sit down and be merry.

SAND.

All the same, I'm glad the new regiment's coming. And I'm glad it'll pass this tavern. We are in the enemy's country, so far from Dublin.

SIRR

Come, let's be merry. Mr. Fitzpatrick, I hear you hanged the last of these rebels yesterday morning.

FITZ.

Yes, sir; the rebellious dog. Under God's providence I hanged that rebel, sir. The rebellious dog, sir, he was little better than a common atheist. If we could catch that arch-traitor, Tiger Roche, sir; why, honest men, sir, could sleep in peace again.

SAND.

Why, I thought Tiger Roche had died twenty years ago.

FITZ.

That's an instance, sir, of the lengths these rebels go to. It's their subtlety, sir; their canting, lying, hypocritical subtlety. He pretended he was dead, sir. He gave out a report that he was dead, sir. And then, sir, if you please, he lands at Killala with a troop of pikemen. Dead? A crocodile's tears, sir. Twenty years of scheming and plotting; and pretending all the time he was in his grave. [*Staring hard at* ROCHE.] Who's the old put with his arm in a bag?

SIRR

O, some old put or other. Let's be merry. [*He rings the bell.*]

[*Enter* HOSTESS]

Mine's brandy. What's yours? What's yours, Sandys?

FITZ.

A bottle of brandy, woman. Bring a bottle of brandy.

[HOSTESS *brings bottle and glasses. Then lingers*]

Well, ma'am. And why don't you go, ma'am?

HOSTESS

The brandy is half a guinea, sir.

FITZ.

You saucy jade. Hark ye, mistress. I'd have you know, ma'am, that I'm a justice of the peace, ma'am. I shouldn't wonder if you're another of these pernicious atheistical Friends of Ireland, as they call them. Pernicious, lying,

murderous dogs.—Well! What are you waiting for?

HOSTESS

I'm waiting for my money, sir. I don't like to be put upon.

FITZ.

What? Rebel, would you, against the King's Peace? I am the King's Peace, madam. Not another word, or I'll commit you.

[*Exit* HOSTESS]

SIRR

You are a wag, sir. You are merry.

SAND.

Excellent. Excellent.

[*They draw to the table, unbuckle their belts, put down their swords and papers, and prepare to enjoy themselves.*]

[*To* FITZ.] They say you made a great haul of rebels in Tipperary, about six weeks back.

FITZ.

Under God's providence, I did, sir. I caught seven, sir. I had them all flogged, sir, and then hanged the eldest. Strong measures, sir; but without strong measures we shouldn't sleep in peace, sir. No, sir. If we didn't exert the strong arm, sir—and you will agree with me that might is right—there'd be a subversion of all Liberty. But I thank God, sir, that we have a Constitution. Let me hear no cant about Equality and Liberty, and the Rights of Man, sir. Show me a man who talks of Truth, and I will show you a rebel.

SIRR

Hear, hear.

SAND.

Well, about the rebels. How did you catch them?

FITZ.

Catch them? I saw them in the streets, sir. The effrontery of these rebels knows no bounds, sir.

SAND.

What, with arms in their hands?

FITZ.

Arms in their hands? No, sir. In Tipperary, sir—under God's providence—they know better.

SAND.

Well—but how did you know them?

FITZ.

Know them, sir? I knew them by their waistcoats, their canting, atheistical, seditious red French waistcoats. There was "Down with Church and State" in every button. Sir, the evidence was plain, sir. Those waistcoats would have condemned a Christian martyr, sir.

ROCHE

[*Aside.*] It seems they did.

FITZ.

What's the old put there muttering?

SAND.

Ah, don't pay any heed to him. Tell us of the man who didn't take off his hat to you.

SIRR

Yes, tell us of that. You are a wag, Mr. Fitzpatrick. I'm afraid you're a merry wag, sir.

FITZ.

Sir, your very good health.

SIRR

O, sir, your servant, I'm sure.

[*They drink*]

SAND.

Well, about the man——

FITZ.

O, yes. The rebellious hound. He didn't take off his hat to me, sir. Well, sir. He that affronts me, sir, affronts King George, sir. For I, sir, under God's providence, am King George's Justice of the Peace, sir; so, sir, when a man does not salute me, he does not salute King George, sir.

He is a rebel, sir. A *sans-culotte*, sir. A murdering pike in the hand of a *sans-culotte*, sir. He is a rebel on the face of it. And so, sir, to make a short tale, I gave him fifty lashes. And d'ye know, sir, he had the brazen-faced effrontery to contradict me when I called him a rebel to his teeth. Beat that if you can, sir. What d'ye think of that, sir? Beat it if you can for cold-blooded, brazen-faced, rebellious audacity. These people are possessed of the devil, sir.

SAND.

Look at my case. Only last week. I had a traitor. He was taken in the fact, as it were. That man Hevey. Why, he was a known traitor. There was no need to try him. The thing was evident. I condemned him to be hanged. Well, he had a mare, a grey mare, a famous creature. I told him to send her round to me. I told him straight out that a mare like her should never again load her loyal loins with the vile burden of

a convicted traitor. And he'd the heaven-sent impudence to complain to General Craig.

FITZ.

These people are possessed of the devil, sir. But come, a bumper. A bumper.

SIRR.

[*Aside.*] I think that old put's a rebel. He blushed like fire, Major, when you told your story.

[*They look at* ROCHE, *who is reading a little book*]

FITZ.

What's he reading? These reading people, they're generally deep ones.

SIRR

[*Peeping.*] It seems to be poetry.

FITZ.

[*Aside.*] Poetry? He is a rebel without doubt. [*Aloud.*] I would make it a capital offence to read poetry. Yes, sir. When a man deliberately starts to poison his mind with incendiary cant

about Truth and Beauty, he is as good as damned, sir. I would hang any man who read poetry. A man who has a book of poems in one hand has always a rebel's pike in the other. You mark my words, sir. Ahem! You, sir! You with your arm in the sling.

ROCHE

You were pleased to speak to me?

FITZ.

Yes, sir, I was pleased, as you call it, to speak to you. Don't trifle with me, sir. For I am, under God's providence, a Justice of the King's Peace, King George's deputy, under God's providence, if you know what that means.

ROCHE

Sir, I know what that means. Yes, sir, I know what that means. Its meaning is written red across this island.

FITZ.

So, sir. I am glad to find you so well affected. Are you an honest man, sir?

ROCHE

Come, Mr. Fitzpatrick. A man is known by the company he keeps.

SIRR

You are a wag, sir.

FITZ.

So, sir, I see you know me?

ROCHE

Not know Mr. Fitzpatrick!

FITZ.

Why then, sir, you will let me see what book you are reading.

ROCHE

With pleasure, sir. The Odes of Horace.

SAND.

I know that Odes O'Horace to be a pamphleteering rebel. Mr. Fitzpatrick, we must secure this man.

SIRR

[*Looking at book.*] There's mighty few rebels understand Hebrew, let me tell you that, Sandys.

ROCHE

[*To* SIRR.] I thought I couldn't be mistaken. Can it be—tell me—Am I not in the presence of Major Sirr, the saviour of this benighted country, the apprehender of that arch-offender, that rebel chief, Sir Peter Keogh? O happy day! A glorious privilege!

FITZ.

Yes, sir, that is Major Sirr, sir. Our Saviour under God's providence, Major Sirr, sir. Come, sit down and be merry, Mr.—Mr.—what's your name?

SAND.

All very well, Fitzpatrick. But you and I are of the Commission. Hark! There's the fifes. The regiment's coming. We'd better send him in with the regiment and have him properly examined.

SIRR

Don't be an ass, Sandys.

FITZ.

Major Sandys, sir. When you are drunk, sir, you are a credit to your King and your religion,

sir. But Major Sandys, sir, when you are sober, sir, you are a dry toast, sir. You stick in an honest man's throat, sir. Damme, sir, sit down and drink like a Christian.

SAND.

Well. The regiment's coming. The band are out of tune. These militia are the deuce. Well, Mr. Rebel, or Mr. Honest Man, whoever you are, the bottle lies with you.

FITZ.

Give us a toast, Mr. Honest Man.

ROCHE

Gentlemen, pass up your glasses. I will give you a toast. Hand up your glasses. I will give you a toast.

SIRR

What is it you're drinking?

ROCHE

Tokay, Major, a kind of Imperial Tokay

FITZ.

A man who drinks Tokay, sir, is a man of principle. Did the rebels drink Tokay? No, sir, they drank vile atheistical whisky.

ROCHE

Come, don't abuse whisky. I've known whisky get a grocer knighted.

FITZ.

Sir, a King, sir, is above the law, sir. Come, give us your toast.

SAND.

Yes, give us your toast.

SIRR

Fill fair, now, honest man.

[ROCHE *lines up the three glasses and fills them full*]

FITZ.

Your toast, now.

ROCHE

Gentlemen, I give you a toast—"The Trinity of Judas."—There, sir, is yours; there's yours, Major Sandys; there's yours, Major Sirr.

[*He flings the glasses one by one into the faces of the trio*]

Gentlemen, I am Tiger Roche. I hope you liked your wine.

SIRR

Traitor! Help me, you two. There is a thousand pounds reward.

FITZ.

My religion forbids re—retaliation.

SAND.

[*To* ROCHE.] Well, you bully. The regiment's coming. Then we'll see about Mr. Tiger Roche, with his toasts and his Hebrew.

[SIRR *tries to reach his sword*]

ROCHE

[*To* SIRR.] I should be sorry to have your blood upon my sword, Major Sirr.

[SIRR *relapses*]

[*To* SANDYS.] Now, Mr. Sandys, about your

regiment. That is not your regiment. Your regiment is a red ruin at Rathnew. Those fifes are the fifes of the Friends of Ireland. In five minutes' time I hope to be leading them to Dublin.

ALL

What! O God, we are lost!

ROCHE

Sit down, you carrion.

SIRR

And I've a wife and two sons.

ROCHE

What! Human feeling in a Sirr!

FITZ.

O Mr. Roche, sir; Captain Roche, sir. Have pity; I am not fit to die.

ROCHE

Truth from a Fitzpatrick!

SAND.

O Captain Roche. You shall have the grey mare. Hevey's famous mare, that won the trotting match.

ROCHE

Generosity in a Mr. Major Sandys.

ALL

O Mr Roche, we'll reform. O, hide us, Mr. Roche. Not the mob, Mr. Roche. We shall be torn limb from limb.

ROCHE

Well, you'd better get up that chimney.

FITZ.

My belly'll never go there.

ROCHE

Well, it had better go there.

SAND.

It won't hold us all. You must stand out, Fitzpatrick. Stand by, Sirr. I go first. [*He gets up the chimney.*]

SIRR

O God, will I be in time? [*He gets up the chimney.*]

The fifes sound clearly

FITZ.

My belly will bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. O you inhuman Sandys. Help me up. O, help me up. I'll squeeze in somehow. O Mr. Roche, help me up. Do now, kind Mr. Roche. O, I shall choke. [*He gets up the chimney.*] [*An agonized voice from the chimney:*] Do our legs show?

[*The band sounds without. Roche gathers up their papers in a pile. Then goes to the window.*]

ROCHE

Ho, there. Captain!

VOICE WITHOUT

What d'ye want?

ROCHE

Bring in a file of men. There are some rebels secreted here.

[*The troops ground arms and halt. Enter* CAPTAIN *and file*]

CAPTAIN

Well, sir, where are the rebels?

ROCHE

Sir, I hold the King's Commission. I have traced these rebels here. Five minutes since we were drinking at this table. They are up that chimney. Do your duty.

SOLDIERS

[*Running to chimney.*] Here's a leg. Here they are all right. Yank them down, sons. We'll give you Killala Bay. We'll give you Erin-go-bragh. In the neck we'll give it to you.

[*They pull down three filthy, blinking scarecrows.*]

[*As they wipe the soot from their eyes* ROCHE *indicates them*]

ROCHE

This [*pointing to* SANDYS] is Mr. Napper Tandy. This [*pointing to* SIRR] is Captain Tiger Roche. He looks a tiger, I must say. This [*pointing to* FITZPATRICK] is that arch-felon, Mr. Wolfe Tone. Guard them carefully, Captain. They are worth some seven thousand pounds.

ALL THREE

[*Recognizing the King's uniform through the soot.*] Unhand us, Captain. We are the King's Justices. That man there is the rebel. That is Tiger Roche, Captain. We are the King's Justices.

A SOLDIER

Bleeding fine Justices the King's got, then.

A SOLDIER

You and your Justices. We'll give you all the justice you need. An ounce of lead is the justice you'll get.

ALL THREE

Unhand us, will you! Captain! What are you doing? That is the rebel. That is Tiger Roche. Take off your men. We are the King's Justices.

CAPTAIN

I've heard that song before. Shut your damned seditious heads or I'll make you chew a trooper's cook.

ROCHE

[*Smiling.*] What in the world's a trooper's cook, Captain?

CAPTAIN

It's a piece of wood, sir. It's all the cook a trooper has. Between the teeth, it is an effective gag.

ALL THREE

But hear us, Captain.

A SOLDIER

Blimy! Shut your heads. Don't you hear what the Captain tells you?

SAND.

Damn it, Captain. You shall suffer——

FITZ.

If there's justice in Ireland.

A SOLDIER

There's no justice in Ireland.

SIRR

But there's law, sir. And you shall have it.

CAPTAIN

Yes, there's law, and you shall have it. There's man-o'-war law—"over the face and eyes."

SERGEANT

Like the cat give the monkey.

ROCHE

You've secured their hands, sir. They are three desperate felons.

SERGEANT

Their hands won't give no trouble.

CAPTAIN

[*To* ROCHE.] Well, sir. What next?

ROCHE

[*Writing at table.*] O, march them into Dublin—this note will explain—and give them in charge to General Craig.

CAPTAIN

I presume you will come, too, sir.

ROCHE

I will follow in a moment. I must place a seal on these papers I have found here.

THE THREE JUSTICES

That proves it, Captain. He's the rebel. He's Tiger Roche. Don't let him stay behind, Captain.

ROCHE

Captain, remove those babblers. Silence, you felons. Give them the trooper's cook. Stay a moment. Leave a file of men. They can bear witness to my sealing the papers.

CAPTAIN

I've a reputation to keep up. What! Leave my men in a tavern? No, sir, and I'm obliged

to you. The hostess will be witness enough. Forward, my croppy boys. Quick march.

ROCHE

But you'll have a drink before you go, Captain?

CAPTAIN

Not in working hours, thank ye. Now, my croppy boys.

THE THREE

You shall hang for this, Captain.

CAPTAIN

There's some I know will hang too. Quick march, I say. [*He nods to* ROCHE.] I'll see you later, at the General's.

ROCHE

At General Craig's. But I shall probably overtake you on the road.

CAPTAIN

"We will meet at that beautiful shore." Quick march, my sons.

[*Exeunt. The troops pass on*]

[*A pause, during which* ROCHE *watches them from the window*]

ROCHE

Well, the fire's out and the guests are gone. There's only the bill to pay. [*He empties a purse on the table.*]

[*Enter* HOSTESS]

HOSTESS

The boat is waiting below, sir.

ROCHE

It is good-bye, then.

HOSTESS

You'll be coming again, sir. There'll be other friends going the same road.

ROCHE

I shall be too old when they try again. Good-bye.

Now with his useless steel the beaten rebel goes
To that proud misery's peace no victor ever knows.

Written in 1905.

BILLING AND SONS, LTD., PRINTERS, GUILDFORD, ENGLAND

00042867

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020